*ANNOTATION*

*OF RESEARCH TOPIC FOR POST-DOC POSITION*

Aristotle´s account of sense-perception (as a challenge for modern thought)

**Position available from:** January 2019

**Department:** Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, Faculty of Arts, Charles University

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Since decades, Aristotle´s theory of sense-perception has played an important role in contemporary debates, being taken as a source of inspiration by one side (Aristotle being seen as a precursor of functionalism) and as a particularly telling point of contrast by another side (Aristotle´s theory of sense-perception revealing more than anything else how far modern science got from the Aristotelian science of nature). Several controversies have arisen among scholars concerning the nature of Aristotle´s theory, especially the way in which the “psychological” side of sense-perception relates to its “physical” or “material” side. Certain aspects of that theory have only recently begun to be coming to light thanks to contribution of various scholars. One of these aspects is the pivotal role in Aristotle´s account of the notions of “ratio” and “mean” used by Aristotle to explain the activity of sense-perceiving as a certain kind of “measuring” or “discriminating”. It is this issue on which our project wants to shed new light, and so enhance our knowledge and understanding of Aristotle´s theory that provoked thinkers throughout the ages and continues to do so nowadays.

At the Department of philosophy and religious studies, there is a strong tradition of Aristotelian studies[[1]](#footnote-1) and two scholars who have been working specifically on the topic of sense-perception. Karel Thein has published a book in 2017[[2]](#footnote-2) which offers a detailed reconstruction of Aristotle´s account of sense-perception as a part of human nature. Robert Roreitner has written dissertation (submitted at the Humboldt University in Berlin, now being prepared for publication) on Aristotle´s view of sense-perception as a passive activity.[[3]](#footnote-3) Inviting a post-doc researcher from abroad would allow the department to create a powerful research team which would be in position to contribute significantly to the current state of art. Moreover, creating such a team would enhance considerably the cooperation with institutions abroad (and many strategic partners of CUNI): it would make Charles University an important centre for the study of this prominent topic, attracting scholars to Prague to take part in workshops, and producing significant publications.

We aim to hire a highly qualified post-doc researcher with an experience in the field who would join the team for two years and work on a topic relating to Aristotle´s theory of sense-perception and its place in his natural philosophy. Ideally, the researcher would explore how the concepts of “ratio” and “mean” contribute to Aristotle´s account, possibly against the background of pre-Aristotelian harmonics and the theory of soul as *harmonia*.

According to Aristotle, the *harmonia*-theory does not fare well as an account of soul itself, but is perfectly applicable to “bodily virtues (or excellences)” (i.e. health and good states of the body). Here, it seems safe to assume that there must be a straightforward connection between perception and perceptual pleasure and pain, on the one hand, and bodily excellences, on the other, and that the *harmonia*-concept might be a way to spell it out in a more rigorous fashion. An inquiry into these contexts could offer a fresh perspective on Aristotle´s account.

During her/his time in Prague, the post-doc is expected to lead a research-seminar where the work in progress in the frame of the project would be presented and discussed: the seminar would provide a platform for exchanging ideas and inviting guests from abroad. She/he is also expected to take part in teaching at the Department of philosophy and religious studies and run 3-4 seminars per academic year (two of which relating directly to the topic of our project and addressed primarily to advanced students, possibly visiting students from institutions abroad). She/he is expected to publish at least one high quality article per academic year. Besides that, we expect the researcher to organize various international events involving strategic partners of Charles University, including at least the following.

(a) She/he should actively participate in organizing the second biennial Central European Graduate Conference in Ancient Philosophy which is to take place in 2019 at Charles University (the first having taken place 2017 in Budapest): the aim of this event is to foster cooperation in ancient philosophy between Central European universities (including strategic partners of CUNI: Humboldt-Universität Berlin, Uniwersytet Jagielloński Krakow and Universität Wien).

(b) She/he is further expected to organize (in 2020) at Charles University a thematic conference on sense-perception in Aristotle, involving scholars (with whom contact has already been established) from universities, including those which are in strategic partnership with CUNI, mainly the University of Oxford, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, and Leiden University.

**Qualifications**

* Ph.D. degree (less than 10 years since graduation)
* High motivation, ability to conduct collaborative research
* Previous participation in local and international projects, experience with preparing proposals
* Good English communication skills both in written and oral form
* Track record of publications

**The applicants should submit**

* [Letter of Reference](http://www.cuni.cz/UK-3887-version1-postdoc_letter_of_reference.doc)
* [Application for post-doc grant at Charles University](http://www.cuni.cz/UK-3887-version1-application_form_postdoc.doc)
* Curriculum vitae
* List of publications
* Copy of university diploma
* Brief description of prior research, skills and experiences

Submit applications with all other documents to marketa.krizova@ff.cuni.cz.

1. See recently e.g. J. Jirsa, “Divine Activity and Human Life”, Rhizomata, 2017, 5 (2), 210-238; K. Thein, „Aristote, critique de Platon sur les causes“, Chôra. Revue d’études anciennes et médiévales 12, 2014, 15‑46; K. Thein, “Aristotle On Why Study Lower Animals (De Partibus Animalium, I,5, 644b22–645a36)”, Eiréné 50, 2014, 208-229; J. Jirsa, “To ergon tou anthropou”, Hungarian Philosophical Review - Magyar Filozófiai Szemle 57, 2013/4, str. 9-23; K. Thein, “Some Conceptual Difficulties in Aristotle’s De caelo I.9“, Rhizomata. A Journal for Ancient Philosophy and Science 1, 2013, 63-84. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. K. Thein, *Aristotelés o lidské přirozenosti: od myšlení k anatomii*, Praha: Filosofia 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. See also R. Roreitner, “Perception and Hylomorphism: Receptive Activity of Sense in Aristotle´s De Anima II,5”, Eirene 50, 2014, 176-207, and R. Roreitner, "Blood, πνεῦμα,or something more solid? Aristotle on the material structure of perceptual apparatus" in: Heat, pneuma and soul in ancient philosophy and medicine, ed. H. Bartoš – C. King, Cambridge University Press, forthcoming 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)